

Social transformation Paradigm: Paradoxes between Traditionalism and Modernism in Pakistan

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Abstract:

The social transformation in Pakistani society reflects a conflict between traditionalism and the modernism. The social alteration in the value system a divergence seems to have been developed between the social groups that has generated a conflict between the modern issues of self existence and traditional values. The paper tries to identify the elements of social confrontation the analysis of the transformation in the feudal structure by the capitalistic development. For this paper makes consideration of the main traits of social alteration that create the conflict among the traditionalists and the modernists in Pakistan. It also emphasizes on the impact of the transformation in the different sections of Pakistani society and level of social stability through the time.

Statement of problem:

The transition in the society is a continues process with a subjective assessment of costs and benefits. A large number of reformists believe that social scenario continues to lose its moral bearings and social consistency which draw people inward to traditional structures based on biases of relations, clan and ethnic solidarities for security and mutual support. That makes dysfunctional the modernity. So, there is always a need for ideological transitions, moral order, universalistic values and customs, not particularistic modes of behaviors. That is the way of ideological changes and modernization, wherein formal rules, formal institutions, social values of equality, freedom of expression, non-discrimination, efficiency, tolerance, pluralism, trust and regularity of behaviors become the base of strong social life.¹

The social transformation is known to be a process of prioritized growth. Not all parts of the society change in equal measures, some sections remain static and still others shift sideways. The paper is based on the hypothesis the diverging scope and directions of change among different institutions become the source of cultural paradoxes in a society.²

The social transformation is the process of planned changes at large scale in a given society. In other words a shift in the social consciousness at individual, collective, regional and global levels is considered social transformation through which new dimensions come ahead and help in resolving social problems. For all modernists the reasons or elements of social transformation in 21st century world are the technological and scientific inventions, urbanization and industrialization, commercial activities and the political economic. Furthermore, the impact of the highly developed countries of the world, the role of mass media of communication, migration, cultural diffusion, the literacy and finally the socio-political awareness among the people to help develop secularism are considered key tools to look towards modernity that is challenging the traditional paradigms of society.

This relationship forms the dialectics of traditionalism and modernity and in that sense what is paradox is that traditionalism and modernity are not mutually restricted but complementary to each other and demonstrate through elements of social changes.³ The process of modernization in Pakistan is proceeding by inventing new traditions, which is combined with economic status, caste system, ethnicity, subcultures.⁴

Historically, a state plays a critical role in the processes of social transformations and modernity. The state authorities try to introduce the transformation for a modern economy and constitutional rule. In the Western countries like Britain and Germany, the states have transformed from feudal to a modern society after the legislative initiatives of 19th and early 20th centuries.⁵ In Pakistan and third world countries, the state is primary institution which can promote transformation/changes in different fields of life. However, the political crises in Pakistan are developing imbalance progress and less effective to modernize the society. The social legislation and public action for modernization of institutions has been lagging by the power rules. Many other institutional imperatives are too neglecting at different levels.⁶

In pre-colonial period the society is based on the agrarian system. The social order, caste and other customary norms were prior for the people. They depended on the animal power and human labour for their economy. a number of people were attached with the agriculture, where land lords, peasants and kammis interlinked with one another. In the colonial period the state authorities tried to bring prosperity and socio-economic changes in the society. They introduced advance technological changes to modernize the society. Thus, they contributed to a process of modernization that has continued to grow even after the independence.⁷

Social diversions in Pakistan:

The political and religious unity of Muslims forced to the establishment of a new independent state. This unity was a mixture of cultural, linguistic and economic values that built up

Pakistani nation. However, the sectarian, ethnic, religious and cultural groups of the society and their political and economic interests generated challenges to this unity. The separation of the East wing and the role of other socio-political and economic crises can be recognized alarming factors for the stability of the state.

Pakistan is a country of pluralistic cultural, ethnic, political, economic and linguistic traditional values with rural and urban demographic divide. Different regions with separate languages, cultural norms, ethnic and tribal values claim separate identity. All these are the factors contributing in the social transformation in Pakistani society. The tension between ethnic-political, socio-cultural, rural-urban and regional identities are the issues that are the concerns for state stability and harmony.

Economic disparities and sectarianism strife and contrast between gated estates of the feudals and the poor peasant and worker class is adding to this social discomfort. These are reflecting conflict between the peasants/labours social groups and the religious class respectively.⁸

Paradoxes of Social transformation:

The economic sources and political institutions of Pakistan are monopolized by conflicting interest groups. A number of non-Muslims, including Hindus migrated to India at the time of partition in 1947. The land and ranks of migrated were distributed into the feudals and bureaucrats in both wings of Pakistan. As a result, absentee landlords became the most powerful element of social and political mechanism and worked to promote the traditional modes of production in the society. They were not so organized that lacked the ability to deal with the modern institutes. A modern, well trained class of bureaucrats became the most effective force of the state and society. The need of a modern state, and the chaotic conditions after the partition enabled them to become semi autonomous social force in Pakistan.⁹ After the establishment of Pakistan the society was dominated by these feudalistic and bureaucratic groups/class. In the contemporary world, socio-economic

system, living style and cultural activities of the people are the evidence of social transformation, in Pakistan the transformation from traditionalism to modernism is creating a challenge and has created two major groups, traditionalists (feudalist) and the modernists (capitalist). The traditionalist or feudal class wants to revive the medieval ruralism, when people were used to obey and follow their feudal policies/system, with traditional religious education of social norms. However, the modernists (capitalist) have preferred the urban advanced technological life, modern scientific education, transitional culture and mix society. They want to keep pace with the modern technological advancement of the world.

The traditionalism and modernism can also be divided into material and non-material aspects and behaviors. The material aspect is technology, sources of economic production, consumer society, while non-material aspects include social values, norms, laws, symbols, religion and morals. For the stability, the state requires a harmonized system, where both traditional and modern variants can be adjusted. The amalgamation of traditional and modern values is essential for the social, political and economic development as well as for the national stability of Pakistan. However, in this dialectics the society of Pakistan has deteriorated its traditional roots in the context of modernism. The patterns of transformation and modernity are encompassing all walks of life. The urbanization and modernity is fast increasing its influence and the society is adopting capitalistic and modern system of development. So, the new values and rising expectations are denying the value of traditional systems of the society. The social transformation has evolved the new modern and materialistic aspects. The consciousness of the people about traditional values and norms has given way to contradictory customs and cultures. So, the traditional theories of social setup are being replaced with the modern ideologies in the society. This transformation is not fully acceptable to the traditionalists groups of society. As a result, an environment of conflict is visible. A situation of ideological divisions and moral improbability prevails in the society. The processes of modernization and traditionalism are

competing in the economic, social, regional, cultural and political fields and introducing divergent lifestyle. It is the view that modernization is attached with the economy which combines with the caste, ethnicity, subculture and lifestyle to create a strong segment of society.¹⁰ In this scenario, the opposing groups want to get their objectives by the politics of threat and confrontation. However the government made policies for the national interests, social harmony, negotiation and national integrity for the stability of the state,¹¹ such as planned policies, for the socio-economic development, conscious efforts for Islamization, political reconciliation and spread of technology. These factors interact with each other and compete with the emotional investment in the conventional domination evolved through historical experiences.¹²

The Paradox of Ethnic Transformation:

The ethnicity represents the particulars of cultural tradition, political economy, modernization, urbanization and development linking both the state and society. The issues of ethnicity and regionalism exist in all areas of Pakistan, demanding for liberal individuality in every sphere of life. The ethnic diversity is defined in terms of the existence of major historical nationalities, the Punjabis, Sindhis, Pakhtoons, Saraiki and Baloch including other major and smaller ethno-linguistic groups. These all speak for their self identity and individuality in Pakistan.¹³

Ethnically, the population of Pakistan is divided into six major and many small groups, the major group coinciding with the culture, region, and language as Sindhi, Baluchi, Pakhtoon, Punjabi, Saraiki and Urdu. According to this classification Punjab demographical stands at first with the ratio of 44.2% population, second are Pakhtoons with 15.4%, third are Sindhi with 14.1%, Saraikis are at forth with 10.1%, lastly Urdu and Balochs with the ratio of 7.6% and 3.6% population respectively.¹⁴

However, some ethnic groups in the society do not exist with an identical class composition. They have no comparative representation in the higher institutions of military

and bureaucracy. Consequently, various ethnic groups in the society are not accepted by the other ethnic classes. This attitude had enhanced the attire of rapidly.¹⁵ The elite feudal ethnic groups are controlling economic, social and political assets. The landlords, capitalists and bureaucrats are still present in the society and are also dominating in the economic fields. A number of land lords are keeping the inherited land and relay on the feudal structure, while others turned towards capitalism. They have entered in the business and commerce where the labour is treated just like medieval European peasants.

In the urban society the educated middle class provides the recruits for the administrative professionals, in civil and military services. However this class is also increasing disparity in size and education among different ethnic groups. For example, the Punjabis have the largest educated middle class as compare to others. The Urdu-speaking community has a big educated middle class because of its historical background, urban residence, and traditional reliance on education for social mobility.¹⁶

In Pakistani society, the sovereignty, provincial autonomy, regional autonomy and self determination are the forms in which the elites of the dominated ethnic groups impose their will on others. They demand for freedom, association with the central government and greater autonomy within the federal structure. Moreover they want to change the provincial boundaries of regional and non-regional groups to bring ethnic harmony/unity. The language and cultural base ethnic groups also demand for the protection and development of their languages and cultures. These are the constant features motivating the ethnic groups to secure their own identity and culture.

Ethno-linguistic Movements:

In Pakistan, the issues of ethno-nationality and language base identity have created challenges for the social stability denial of autonomy, ethnic representation, disparity in the allocation of economic sources, interprovincial migrations and

lingua-cultural self assertion against the domination of Urdu as national language and culture, has strongly added to that.¹⁷

The sub-national or ethno-linguistic issues in the regions of Pakistan are centered on the social institutions and practices of the people. The powers of local Pirs, Landlords and the Jagirdars demonstrate the traditionalism that generates a confrontation with the social transformation. In Punjab the feudal class and the elites support and back the reactionary political parties and the ethno-linguistic groups for their own objectives. In the province, the regional and language base, identity conflict has taken the form of demand for new definition of federation. In Baluchistan, the conflict between Balochs and Pakhtoons, after a long period of political cooperation is visible. Thus, the ethno-linguistic or sub-national movements for provincial identity fast among the ethnic communities. The objectives of these movements may vary with one another, but the theme is common to get separate administrative centre.¹⁸ Different provincial self-directed groups as a Mutheda Qaumi Movement (MQM), Sindh Desh Awami National Party, (ANP), Baloch Federations, and Saraiki activities etc. are claiming their rights and are confronting with the centre for that. The efforts of ethnic or regional base identity are working with the strategy to pressurize the government and create the elements of devolution of power. In this sense they are fighting against traditional political culture.

Economic imperatives and social transformation:

The socio-cultural transformation is one of the essential elements of the development, always complemented with economic growth. The economic historians acknowledge that the rise of the west from poverty to prosperity was based on the development of trade, commerce and modernity.¹⁹

The economy of Pakistan is changing with new trends. The economic trends show continuing changes, balance of payments and reserves difficulties that at times paralysis of industrial and commercial activity. These new trends are also influencing the socio-economic relations of the society.²⁰ For the economic development, the society requires multiple processes, the dispersion of modern materialism, consumerism and indigenization of technologies, products and institutions. Each of these is providing a range of class segments and

cultural groups. From Karl Marx to Ralph Dahrendorf, a member of economic theories focus that the competition for the means of production, authority and power is the force to break the traditional dominance of relationship. In Pakistani society, the institutions and social divisions are the symbols of economic and material needs being in conflict with the social and political practices.²¹

In the socio-economic structure, the agriculture, traditional class relations, social influence of feudals and traditional values co-exist with the capitalist structure with in spite of all its distortion and unevenness.²² The economic changes are providing alternative means of production to the society to get money and power. Moreover, the traditional feudal class is also coming ahead parallel to the capitalists. The class structure in different feudal regions and ethnic groups is varying considerably. These all changes are of great value in nature to analyze the ethnic, socio-economic and other issues in the society.²³ The economic development is modernizing the social groups to work for the cultural homogenization and national integration in Pakistan.

Impacts of Social institutional transformation:

After the establishment a proper structure of common social institutions was essential in Pakistan. The society was fully organized in their historical, social and traditional formations and was ready to constitute the structure of prosperity through the social unity. That was considered essential for the national and regional development.²⁴

The process of modernization is continues through the modern education, electronic media, advance technology, westernization and urbanization. In this process the outlook of life, the customs and costumes, the tastes and modes of livings of people are also in the transitional process, especially in urban areas. However, the urbanization/modernization without social planning is causing many problems in the society. These conflicts are also leading the people to the conflict between their traditional values and social, cultural, ethical and linguistic norms of supremacy.

According to the socialists the social transformation and traditional history of Pakistani society evolves around its

political development and policies. The gradual changes in the government from elected to military rule, dictator type politics, corruption, economic plans and foreign gratitude are affecting the social traditional structure and moral orders of the people. These elements work to change the ideologies of the people and slowly, the society is moving towards modernity and materialism by modification i.e. the traditional modes and values.

The race or confrontation between traditionalism and modernism is beneficial as well as harmful for the society as unnecessary advancement creates some challenges/threats for the survival of the people. However, traditional ceremonies of marriage and other religious performance have seen little change as far as their scale and expenses are concerned.²⁵ The ideological and socio-cultural values of these ceremonies cannot be denied, but is sacrificing just for the modernity and advancement.²⁶

The basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, residence, education, and medical treatment should provide for the people, irrespective of cast, creed and race. In actual, Pakistan should develop as a welfare state and provide basic needs of life to the people. There should be a harmonizing environment for the social development. It's necessary for the developing nations that they learn from their past experiences, inspect them and do not ridicule. Even, if they are millennial in their approach, should avoid discussion of controversial issues until trust is built. The communal groups of society should cooperate with the modernists, wherever they show a desire for change. They should avoid the confrontations and try to understand their responsibilities in positive way.²⁷

In Pakistan, the urbanization is a force of social transformation and modernization. Through the urbanization the rural areas including towns are converting into urban cities. Moreover, the urban ways of living are spreading in the less developed and rural societies. However, the urbanism is required the institutional reforms and the provision of infrastructure and services. In the urban societies, the interests, moral orders and the relations of the people/communities change rapidly. So, the Pakistani society is experiencing the loss of traditional ideals, culture and community²⁸

Conclusion:

The social development in Pakistan is based on the modernization, but the traditionalism also forms essential as the base of transformation and modernity. There is required an organized system and struggle for the positive social changes. The individuals should organize social movements for the rights, fair justice, minorities, religious toleration and equality. The political authorities should sponsor social legislation and basis of a modern society through the welfare rights of the poor, reforms, modernization of laws, freedom of information act and social insurance for the unemployed people. The administrative, educational and health reforms should be reorganize by the local and provincial authorities and the citizens.

In fact, Pakistan has multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi ethnic social groups who demanded for them individual rights. All these ethnic groups should equally treated by the government and provide equal opportunities. All languages and culture should promote and develop feelings of respect, tolerance and national integration among the people in every field of life. The integration is necessary for the social harmony and to reduce the social conflicts in Pakistan.

The ethnicity poses the greatest challenge to eliminate ethnic disparities for national harmony and integration. The national integration is a desirable goal for the stability and progress of Pakistan. The primary emphasis on integration in the past has led to explosive policies about ethnic diversity and disparities. By the modernist and traditionalist idealistic approaches can promote the equity and harmony among different ethno-linguistic, regional and national groups. However, the suppression of the traditionalists and their rights in the name of modernity, security, unity, and integrity may leave opposite effect on the society. It can be harmful for the progress and the stability of Pakistan.

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